

Ewig: Today is September 12, 1983, and we are talking to Mr. Krueger at his home in Lovell, Wyoming. My name is Rick Ewig.

Ewig: Mr. Krueger, when were you born?

Krueger: I was born April the 5th, 1894.

Ewig: Was that here in Wyoming or was it somewhere else?

Krueger: No, that was in Bern, Kansas. My father and mother came to Wyoming in about '85. And my sister who has since passed away came too, she was born at Sundance, Wyoming.

Ewig: What year was she born at Sundance?

Krueger: 1888. My father was a tool dresser for a construction company and a prospecting company that were looking for coal before the time that the railroad built north from Cheyenne and he dressed tools for that. He came as a tool dresser. He was an immigrant to the United States and he had served apprenticeships as a blacksmith, a locksmith and a carriage maker. And then he got this contract to go with this construction company looking for coal. The railroads at that time had to have coal in order to run the railroads. They couldn't haul it too far and they discovered coal in that area at that time and his job was taking care of the drill bits and things like that.

Ewig: So he worked at Sundance then?

Krueger: At Sundance. And he went up on the Big Horn Mountains hunting in thoses days and looked down into the Big Horn Basin and as a child he told me they left that area as soon as the railroad built as far west as Rapid City, South Dakota, and went back to southeast Nebraska. So my sister was born in Wyoming and I was born in Kansas. And during that period of time mother figured that Wyoming wasn't much of a place to raise a family. She said there was nothing except rattlesnakes and long horned cattle and cowboys. And the Kansas, Nebraska country had settled up more, but on this hunting trip that my father made to the Big Horns, he was up on top where he could look down into the Big Horn Basin and he saw the vast amounts of flat land and also of good streams running by. And he told me the story of this as a little child that this would develop into a great country. He was a German and he didn't like old Kaiser Wilhelm so he left Germany and came to the United States.

Ewig: Was your mother German too? Did she come with him?

Krueger: No, my mother's maiden name was Harvey and there's Harveys all over the West in great quantities. One of my uncles, George Washington Harvey had 15 children all of them boys. No, all but one boys. And of course that spread the name pretty well. They were out in California before the discovery of gold and were there at Sutter's Mill when they first found gold. And it's a long story but they came to what is now Philadelphia. There were 5 Englishmen and nearly all of these boys were given the name of a president, like Grover Cleveland, George Washington, and so on. They were named after different presidents. I visited those people. They came to my place, or my mother's place in Nebraska, but on the whole there was something about the West, you know, for a young man at that time. Young men were goint West. That was just after the Civil War and that's when the West settled up. So, I always had an idea that I would like to go to Wyoming, but I just never got around to it. I'd remembered these stories that my father had told me and in the first 3 years of what I consider my adult life, starting at 18, I taught school for 3 years.

Ewig: Where did you teach school?

Krueger: At first a country school out of Burchard, Nebraska. Then a little town school at Louistown, Nebraska. Then I was principal at Elk Creek, Nebraska, the year that I was 21. I taught plain and solid geometry and the first and second year of Latin. In the high school there I was the high school principal. But I decided that I didn't want to be a teacher. In 1910, at Dubois, Nebraska, I built a glider and flew it off of a hill down there.

Ewig: Did you land safely?

Krueger: No, I didn't. I broke it into 4 pieces when I landed. I never was as high afterwards as I was on that flight. It was a very short flight, but it was a little longer than the one that the Wrights made. I had grown up and read everything that I could on aviation. My father had a hardware store and he had a tinsmith working for him and he was a skilled mechanic. So they all helped me build this glider thinking it would be a good thing. Good experience for me. It turned out that it wasn't very controllable and my mother put a stop to that foolishness after the first flight. I came down, I went off into a wind blowing directly into the hill and the wind was increasing. We tried 2 or 3 times and it wouldn't take off. As the wind increased we got more lift and all at once it just picked up and started to fly. We had a man on each wing tip and one on the tail and I was in the center of it with a couple of arm rests and I was supposed to control it by the balance of my

body and after I got up a little ways there was no place that I wanted any worse than back. So I shifted my weight and I started around the hill and it became uncontrollable and it dived back into the hill. It first lit with one wing down. It snapped that off and then just bounced over and snapped the other wing off and then come back on the tail and broke the tail off. I was in the center section. I went out through the bottom of it and skinned by ribs and generally shook me up.

Ewig: Did you find that to be a good experience as your friends had told you?

Krueger: Well, it was a good experience because it made me more aware of the planes that I did fly later. And it taught me a great deal about the nomenclature that goes with aviation and the reasons why a plane flies and a lot of the terms that are generally used in aviation. My mother put a stop to that. I was still a high school kid and she put a stop to that and I didn't have a chance to fly and do what I was interested in. I quit teaching school and I got into building construction work. Most anything that had a little spice to it for height and I followed that down through Oklahoma and on into Texas. And then I worked for the Army YMCA. They had charge of the buildings down there at Camp Wilson, at San Antonio and I worked 8 or 9 months for them and then the war broke out. But during that 8 or 9 months there was a flying field out south of San Antonio and then another flying field out north of San Antonio, which was the army field and I got to see them quite a lot. In my spare time I hung around that flying field out south of San Antonio and there was a woman who had 2 sons, or 2 daughters and a son. All 3 of them were aviators. And the old plane that they had instead of having a wheel or a stick to control your lateral movement, had an affair that came up on each side. A moveable seat and 4 cables were fastened to this moveable seat and if the wing went down naturally you'd fall over that way, or lean that way and then that would throw your aileron down and the wing would lift. And that was the way that you took care of your lateral movement. And then they had a control that pushed back and forth in front of you which took care of your perpendicular movement. I learned a little bit about aviation down there. And I was on my way home and war broke out on the 6th of April. My birthday happened to be on the 5th, but before midnight we knew that we were going into a general war with Germany.

Ewig: Which year was that?

Krueger: That was, I think 1923. Let's see, I would have been 23 years old. No, it was 1917. 1917. And I got off of the train at Little Rock, not Little Rock but St. Louis

and was going back across over to Kansas and that was where I first heard about this reserve officer's training camp that was opening up at Little Rock. So I went out and put in my application for that. I was only 23 years old and I looked like I was about 19. And I personally thought it was a distinct advantage if you were going to be put in a position where you were going to lead other men that you looked a little older. If you looked a little older it was much easier to sell yourself than it was if you didn't look a little bit older. In the meantime I raced motorcycles. Had a bad accident. Had a broken collarbone. I had a big knot on my shoulder, if you'd like to feel it.

Ewig: That was caused by a motorcycle accident?

Krueger: Yes. I was running a cross country race and I missed a bridge. I was still teaching school at that time. But that didn't work very well when I put a gun on it. So I got one of the old felt horse collar pads and cut a hole in it and taped in on under my shirt. And then that worked all right. But I felt that there were 3500 candidates and they were going to send 3,000 of them back home and commission 500. And I got to thinking about it. I decided I didn't want to be in the infantry because I just couldn't put my heart into bayonet practice. That was one thing that I just couldn't do. I just felt like if I was tying into some fellow about twice as big that I'd know he was going to kill me because he could overpower me. And I got a chance to go into the light artillery. I transferred to the light artillery and I was in it 3 days and they asked for volunteers for aviation. So that was just what I wanted so that's what I did. They turned around and sent me back to ground school at Austin, Texas. The University of Texas. There were 12 of these ground schools set up in the United States at major universities. I had had a pretty good knowledge of internal combustion engines and how they worked and what to do because of the motorcycle experience that I'd had. And I knew all the nomenclature of pieces and parts in an airplane. So that was another factor in my set up when I went into aviation. Every person in these ground schools had to have a certain amount of qualifications or a certain amount of adaptability to that sort of thing. You're supposed to have 2 years or more of college work. Well, or it's equivalent. After high school I'd gone on to teacher's college a couple of summers and had worked up some credits there and a little correspondence and worked up some credits there and then I'd had 3 years of teaching. They counted that as the equivalent and I got right in.

Ewig: Well good.

Krueger: Although, at least I made it stick. Was was declared on the 6th of April and that was on the 19th of April that I went into the ground school. And somewhere around close to the 6th of June when I got out. They had a psychologist down there and he give us a psychological examination as well as the other kind.

(Herman Krueger's niece and ^{her} husband come in.)

Ewig: So then did you go from flight school then? I mean, did you go from ground school to flight school in June?

Krueger: There was ground schools and Col. Bingham, who was one of the leading psychologists came down there to examine us. And I always thought that the reason that the army asked for 4 men from each ground school to be sent to Europe and he this psychologist examined you and then he got your background and he talked to you. I came out 7th in that school. There was about 150. And the first 4 to be chosen were shipped out that night to meet in New York to go to England to learn to fly Handly Pages. That was the heavy bomber. And I felt pretty bad that I didn't get in the first group of 4. However, they routed me out of bed about 4:00 the next morning and told me to get down and take a look at the bulletin board. Which I did and I went down and there was my name posted to go out in the next 4. And we were to go to France. So they shipped us out right away. They didn't even give us time enough to go home. And I was attached to the First Aerial Squadron. And Major Felloy(?) who is the first man to fly ~~out~~ of an airplane West of the Appalachians was in charge of the group. And there was 4 of us from each ground school. That made up 48. One fellow got sick, and really did, after he was chosen and he didn't get to go. Now, did you find a picture?

Ewig: That's a picture of your squadron?

Krueger: No, that was a picture of an expeditionary force that was sent to Italy under Major LaGuardia. And I'm right there in the middle. The reason they didn't put me out in front, I had on nothing but a shirt.

End of side one

Krueger: Going overseas. We went so far north that it was in the major part of the submarine blockade. We were clothed in summer clothes and had come out of Texas and then went so far north and then came back down to I think it was Ireland from the north. And LaGuardia had not yet come into the picture. He was a Captain then. They shipped us to France and we were the first group that actually landed on the continent. They met us at the dock and unloaded us and marched us about 5 miles to a camp, a rest camp they called it. But there was no rest there. This rest camp was so full of cooties

that you couldn't sleep to save your soul. They didn't have any planes for us so they made a propaganda outfit out of us for a month. They shipped us from one big town to another in France and had us parade. There were only 40,000 troops in France at that time and we paraded in one town and then in train at night and get up the next morning and parade in another. And it was about 15 days of continuous walking and parading.

Ewig: What was the purpose of having you parade in all the towns?

Krueger: It was for propaganda purposes. The reason they did that was because the English and French both wanted people to know that the Americans were getting through the German blockade, the submarine blockade. And that they were getting through in quantity. They had us rated probably too high. But they felt that if we could get through then others could get through. Then there would be Americans coming in vast numbers and that's exactly what did happen. There was a couple million of Americans in France at the end of the war. But we paraded. We went over there to learn to fly foreign planes. All we had in the United States were old O X motors and the planes were too slow. The enemy could engage in combat as long as he chose to. And if the thing was going a little bit the wrong way for him he could turn on the gas and get out and just leave you. We lacked 15, 20 miles an hour being as fast. Our motors were not as dependable. We were really ill prepared. And so, this group was chosen to go over there to learn to fly foreign planes so that we could instruct the instructors for those that would follow and teach them how to fly foreign planes. But they didn't have enough planes for them. And we went down to see the Lafayette Esquidrille that was flying at Etampes and it was quite a revelation. About the only restriction of a Lafayette pilot, who were American volunteers, was that he couldn't have too much gold braid on his cap. They had horizon blue pants, they had white pants, ~~they~~ gold-black pants, every color, every beautiful color that they could find in cloth they made into uniforms. They were all American volunteers who furnished their own planes. But they didn't have any planes for us. The Lafayettes had volunteered and furnished their own planes. So we stuck around Etampes for a little while and then we got out of there and LaGuardia, who was a congressman, later mayor of New York, but not then, had gone over to see the war conditions first hand. He knew about their Italian planes which were Capronis. And he knew about those.

Those planes were 3 motor planes. With a Nacelle (plane body) in front, a motor behind you and a motor on each wing. You sat in a space just like the 3 of us here. You could stick your hand out like this, if you reached just a little farther why the propeller blade would cut your finger off. Those planes had no mufflers on them and 2 of those motors were tractor motors, on the wings, which pulled and one in the back which was a pusher. And then you were between the 3 motors. You had a Nacelle out in front and a 4 man crew. The original ones went about 85 miles an hour, carried about enough gas for 6 hours and carried 1800 pounds of bombs. As a trainer plane we had to learn to fly and we had to develop the idea of a pusher plane. one motor was turned around the other way and had a pusher propeller on it that ran behind your back and because of the pusher angle of the thing they trained us on the very earliest of the planes, just like the old First World War I Farman that first crossed the English Channel with a 90 horsepower Anzanie motor on it. And then there were the various types of Farmans; the Columbo Farman, and the Henry Farman were both pushers and the old part of it was around 90 to 100 horsepower motor. We got our pilot's license on those. My pilot's license was issued in Italy. LaGuardia picked up this group of fellows and took us to Italy to train and he was quite a convincing speaker. You'd listen to him talk and you'd be sure that he was just exactly right. Then after you got away from him and had time to analyze it you weren't sure that he was right at all. He left you in kind of a quandry. He also took the training. And he was a very poor pilot. He cracked up 3 planes. Once he landed in an Austrian prison camp. The Italians had captured these Austrians and had a big prison camp and he thought that he had landed in Austria. All of these fellows spoke Austrian and didn't speak Italian. Finally they got him out of there. But he had just accidentally lost several men. Well, we went along with what we called horseshoe accidents. For instance, I saw one fellow's plane fall for maybe half a mile and came down right in front of a hospital and hit the telephone wires, there was a vast amount of telephone wires, and it broke the fall and they picked him up and forced him into the hospital. Held him down. They were sure that he couldn't be possibly anything but badly hurt. So he quieted down in a little while and when he got a chance he jumped out of bed and ran out of the hospital and came back to camp. We used to buzz those old 2 wheeled carts, they were 2 wheeled wagons, the wheels close to 10 feet high and they'd have 2 oxen on them with a tremendous load of hay and some of the boys were a little bit wild and one of them got so interested in watching those oxen and watching this fellow driving them that when the plane began to get down low the fellow slid off of the wagon and ran. Off of this load of hay. And the pilot

flew right into the load of hay and took it off of the wagon and landed without being hurt. Broke his plane all to pieces. But there were all kinds of various accidents.

Ewig: What kind of combat missions did you fly?

Krueger: What kind of combat did we fly?

Ewig: Yes.

Krueger: I didn't go into combat in 1917. I was one of the first groups that went there. I showed the picture of that first group. That school grew to a very large aviation center. There were 150 students and I've seen as many as 100 planes in there around this field at one time. And they didn't have radar and so on. The first 3 men killed were Oliver Sherwood, George Beach, who was from Colorado, and Bill Cheaney. George Beach, Bill Cheaney and Oliver Sherwood. They were probably the first 3 men that finished their schooling and they kept shipping in more men wanting to be pilots. So the early ones in there became instructors. And we'd run a brevet line, we'd get up in the morning at 5:00. We were on the go from Manfredonia, right across from Rome. We trained on more advanced planes at the same time we were teaching. During the day we were instructors to these other beginning students. Then they ran short of propellers, they ran short of gasoline, and there was some periods when shortages grounded us for a couple of weeks at a time. Then we had to take night flying. We learned to fly at night and that was when we went on a Caproni plane. The Caproni was a 3 motored, 450 total horse, 3 150 horse motors. You'd set right between those 3 motors. There were no mufflers on them. When you turned those motors on it roared terrifically. And the Caproni C3A was the one that we got. That really saw us through on the front. It was a 86 foot wing span. And something like 3 ton weight. I've driven one of those from a standstill to 5,000 meters and back down in 3/4 of an hour.

Interruption

Krueger: I'll get some of the date that I've been able to pick up. I was one of the first men in this Caproni group and we instructed and we took night flying and in '18, 1918, they sent us to the front and we weren't there a year, but we were there from the previous September to the front about the 4th of July, 1918.

Ewig: Where was the front at that time?

Krueger: Padua. It was the Piave River, which ran from Venice on up to the mountains. And Padua was a university town about 40 miles back from Venice. We were assigned to

different squadrons. I happened to have been assigned to the 8th Squadron Caproni. It was quite famous squadron before the time that I went to it. LaGuardia took us up to Padua and it was the 4th of July and we saw this squadron of Capronis going over the town way, way up there. They were real high and they were headed over for a bombing raid. It made quite an impression on us. We knew that in a very short time we'd be doing the same thing because we'd had every possible kind of training that they could give us. Americans were going to start making Capronis in America. There was 16 of us that were chosen on this Caproni program. We were suppose to go to the front and get a month's first hand experience and if we were still alive why then we were suppose to come back to the states and by that time the manufacturing set up was suppose to be set up. And the Italians sent over a couple of young Italians and a couple planes to New York and they got a little bit wild with them and cracked them up and they both were killed. Killed and both planes were gone. The Caproni was they'd assigned us to different squadrons. I happened to go into a very fine squadron. They lined the Italians up on the field for these different groups. And they, these Italians, couldn't talk much English and we couldn't talk much Italian, but they came over and a quite small, red headed, freckle faced Italian came over. He said, "Would you like to take a ride with me?" I said, "why sure." So we went out and got one of these Capronis and took off. And we just went up and went around a little bit and suddenly he pointed down and said I want to go down. So we came down and he wanted me to make the landing. So I made the landing and just as were about to slow down he motioned to me to take off so we took off. We went back out again. Everything was camouflaged and what he was wanting to see was whether I would be able to locate the field. It was a strange field, I'd never been on it before, I didn't know how it was laid out. We got up to maybe 5,000 feet and I was busy with the controls and everything and then he wanted me to go down. Some of the pilots had difficulty finding the field that they'd flown off of because it was so well camouflaged. Well, we went up. there was a round mountain with a castle on it and this fellow went up there and he just flew around and around and around this castle and pretty soon there was a man and a woman and a young lady came out. I was setting right next to him. There were dual controls. He just turned loose of his controls, he didn't say anything and we were just going around this castle. And he was leaning over the side throwing kisses to his sweetheart. I took over. He didn't tell me to take over, but I took over because I didn't like the angle that we'd got into and so I just held it. I corrected it a little and then just held it. And we went around and around and around and around. Then finally he waved at them and we took off again and went back up into the field and landed and just as I thought my

trial was over why he took off again. Told me to take off and I took off and he went back into the Alps, into a box canyon and we flew up this canyon and all at once he was driving and he just threw up his hands like that and shook his head. You could see the canyon wall right ahead of you. The canyon ended with the walls on either side and there wasn't room enough in between to make a normal turn and come back. And he just threw up his hands like he was scared and when he turned loose of the controls I took over. Just brought her up like this and then side slipped her back around. And came in and I think I made probably the 3 best landings in my life and he said, "Do you always land like that?" I said, "Oh, yes," and laughed. And he said this man is a sergeant in the Italian army and because he doesn't have sufficient education he couldn't be commissioned, but he's had more flights than any other sergeant in the Italian army. And he's asking you to be his co-pilot. Well, I was glad to accept. So he ~~was~~^{was} in the 8th Squadron Caproni. Well there were various ones of us that were selected that way ~~by~~ these Italian pilots.

End of tape.

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Ewig: Did you then start flying combat missions after you had been chosen?

Krueger: Then I begin flying. They called us in. Then I begun flying combat with this fellow. I had 2 gunners, one in the front of the plane and one on top of the motor that was at the back end of the fuselage. This may interest you. I was the 72nd American pilot overseas and this was an expeditionary force. There had never been any Americans in Italy before, military wise.

Ewig: And this here is your I.D. card. While you were over there in Italy?

Krueger: Yes.

Ewig: There's a picture of you there too.

Krueger: There's a picture of me. I trained overseas and flew there. This was me at that time.

Ewig: Were you a lieutenant at that time?

Krueger: Yes. I was a first Lieutenant. They offered me a 2nd Lieutenantcy and I turned it down. I said everybody above you throws all the dirty work down to you, everybody below you blames you for the orders that you've got to put out. I wouldn't fly as a 2nd Lieutenant. 2 weeks later I got my card as a 1st Lieutenant. They

had promised me that if I did succeed in meeting the requirements that I would be commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant and they were breaking their word when they offered me a 2nd Lieutenantcy. The old major sat there and he said, "You know how long I was a 2nd Lieutenant?" I said, "I have no idea." He said, "4 years, 4 straight years." He said, "You ought to consider it an honor." I said, "I don't." I said, "I know how to fly and it didn't take me 4 years to learn." I said, "I will not do it." Now I don't have my original pilot's license but I've lost it some where in all these years. But I do have my Superior License which was the next one higher. Let's see, that was the Superior License, and then the next one, that was signed by Caesar Parauglia. This was the time that I was on the front, about 5 months. The average lifetime of an American pilot on the front at that time was about 6 weeks.

Ewig: You beat the odds then.

Krueger: Well, the original pilot's license, but I never had an American license. I flew in Italy in an Italian squadron and I flew before the Prince of Wales and the King of Italy on Italian Day at the big celebration. And I was decorated with the Italian War Cross. I have this, the military ~~and~~ ⁹⁴⁶ cross, in the vault at the bank at Lovell and the papers for it.

Ewig: Why did you win the air cross?

Krueger: Why did I win it?

Ewig: Yes, for what achievement?

Krueger: Well, that is something of a question. It was never recorded why I won it. I won it because of one engagement that I was in. When I came in with 67 holes shot through my plane. My gunners had shot down 2 planes, but the front was liquid and moving fast and we never saw the second one hit the ground but we saw the black smoke. We saw him spinning down and we saw the black smoke coming up. And by actual count I had 67 holes. They counted the bullet holes in your plane and as a bomber they rated you, the number of cribs, the number of miles that you went behind the lines, the number of bullet holes that you had in your plane, and the success of your bombing. I was sent out on a trip with 6 other men, when we got to the target it was covered with clouds. I wouldn't drop my bombs because we took pictures of our bombs as we dropped them and we also took pictures of them as they hit the ground showing the accuracy of our bombing. And when I got to this target, why I always wanted the pictures to show the results. So I went down through the clouds and when I came out on the lower side of the clouds, we were over this air field. I don't know

whether it was German or Austrian. But anyway, there were 4 planes in the air and there was 1 fellow, 1 of the 6, who was a fellow by the name of Fritz Weyerhauser. He was a son of that Weyerhauser lumber firm in the West. Well known multimillionaire outfit. And he was in combat. He had already gone down, but I hadn't seen him go down and he was already in combat with one of these planes and apparently they decided that he was doing too good of a job and they quit him and took off after me. There were 4 of them and we got the first one over the field. We unloaded our bombs and we got the first one, the fellow was evidently waiting up above. They had some information that we were coming. He was waiting up above the clouds. These were broken clouds and the other planes coming over hit an open place and took their pictures and then started back for home. Weyerhauser had gone down into combat and I chose to follow him. When I got down they quit him and jumped onto me and from somewhere a plane appeared above us and began shooting at us as we were going down. We could see, looking at the engine right out here, pipes just disappearing on it and you could see just one wing raise and lower, raise and lower. And you knew that they had hit the spar that runs through the wing. We unloaded our bombs where they were suppose to be and took pictures of them and got out and started home and they chose to follow us and we got one of them. We thought that we were getting away. They followed along behind and just didn't try to catch up. And I suddenly realized that what they were doing was driving us over 1 of their famous batteries, which was known as the Battery Extraordinary. It was manned by professors from the Austrian University. The Austrian University had some of the best mathematicians in the world. And so what they were doing was that they had a barrage up on both sides of us and then they were behind us driving us in, trying to drive us in over that Battery Extraordinary. We had the information on it. We'd seen this one plane go down and there was nothing to do but just turn left and go through the barrage. We were more afraid of their artillery then we were of their fighter planes. So I turned through this barrage. When I came out on the other side of it they saw me turn through the barrage and they were far enough back that they went around the end of that barrage and met us on the other side. Then they got their second wind. There was 2 of them that came around and we got the 2nd one. We saw the black smoke and we saw him spinning down and the black smoke was just pouring out of it. But we never saw him hit the ground. And we never got credit for the second one on that trip. Because the front was moving so fast in those days and there was so many things to do that you couldn't get verification without being out of touch with what was going on at the front. The front moved 20 miles or 30 in a night. So, I was recommended for the Italian War Cross by the Captain, Caesar Perauglia.

But it was right at the close of the war and I didn't receive this decoration or the reasons for it for some 2 or 3 months after the war was over and I was back home. Then it came in the mail. The War Department asked for verification. They verified one plane hit but they couldn't say that the other one actually hit the ground. So, I never got any recognition for the second one. I turned up in the hospital with the flu in the last 3 days of the war. This all happened in the last 3 days of the war and I turned up in the hospital. They pulled me out of combat and sent me back to the hospital at Verona. And, I was a mighty sick boy. I told this story one time to a group of fellows. Well, the American Legion had a man on each Legion night telling the toughest part of the combat that he'd seen. And this was the toughest part of combat that I'd seen. Because of the 67 holes and that was verified because when I came in there was one man who counted the bullet holes in your plane. There was one man who unstrapped your cameras from the bottom. You simply worked them with a lever. It turned a plate, the plate had a metal backing on it, it was in, and it dropped down. It snapped a picture and then as you pulled it back it, it dropped down and the metal backing was impervious to light so you had 12 plates so we had verification of the contact, but the War Department wrote me and asked me for verification and I could only verify the one. It was the main spar through the wing that was shot through and just a couple of little thin pieces on either side and then the lower ones had broke and the wing was just raising up and down, up and down. Just let that wing come up and down. In about 2 or 3 weeks I came out of the hospital and Pershing issued an order for the army of occupation and asked for all unattached troops to be sent home immediately. What he wanted was the experienced men. I was in the hospital after having had the flu and they sent us who had been on combat duty to France, supposedly, and detached us, so we arrived in France as unattached troops. They put us on a boat and sent us back to New York and I was back for New Year's Day, 1919.

Ewig: That was fast.

Krueger: That was fast. I was one of the first to go and one of the first to come back. And I have here a record of various flights as I made them. This was my flight book. 152 times that I was off of the ground in that year and a half.

Ewig: Were those all combat flights?

Krueger: No, oh no. No, a lot of them, I tested in the morning for beginning students. I got up at 5:00 and drove test planes for beginning students to see that everything was working right. I got up at 5:00 and usually

worked for about 2 hours in the morning. I went to the factory. I learned how to fly the new 900 (may have been the 600). That was 3 300 horsepower motors. It was the biggest plane that was made and in actual use. And, actually there were not so very many combat flights because we went at night. I think that I can spot this plane that I was telling you about. (In the book, World Aircraft Origins, WWI. Rand McNally) Yes, here it is, I drew a little German cross there.

Ewig: Yes, you described it as a bombing raid 2½ hours long. Flew over clouds most of the way, picked up escort, bombed objective. What kinds of targets did you bomb usually?

Krueger: Oil tanks, railroad stations, highways. We bombed out the Germans as fast as they came to help the Italians. We had spies on the other side. They invaded Italy. The Austrians invaded Italy. A bunch of Italian officers sold out to the Austrian government, let them come through the pass in the mountains and eventually every one of those officers that did that was executed. They got the death penalty for that. And shortly after we got to Italy, the Austrians came clear across, within about 16 miles of France. Then the Italians drove them back and held them on the Piave River. We were already down below there. I had 5 straight months on the front. And then I got leave and another fellow and I got leave to go anywhere in Italy and possessions. It looked like it was going to be quiet. So we went down to the Straights of Mecina and crossed to Palermo, Sicily. Crossed over to Sicily. I went down around, on that leave. We had 2 weeks leave and then we suddenly noticed that the Englishmen were getting called back, that there was a definite reason for the English to be called back, the English officers. So, we went back and went over the Straights of Mecina and then went up the coast through Naples and Rome and on up to Turin, no, Milan, which was only 40 or so miles from there. I kept a record of some of these flights, some were long and some of these were just short. Then I was 1 of 12 who was called in by the Caproni factory to learn to fly the new 900. And I got a gold medal from the Caproni factory for that. It's down here in the vault. I haven't seen it in several years but it's still down there I know. Possibly a lot of it was due to being the very first to go. I showed you that picture of that 48. 47 really, and 1 fellow got sick. I have a large collection of bombing pictures. People say you didn't have much there. You didn't have much in those days. Well, we had the biggest plane there was. And we were as proud of it as the fellows that fly the biggest today.

Ewig: Did the Germans have an edge in air power? Did they have better planes than what you had and the Italians had?

Krueger: They had a bomber, a 2 motored bomber that was better at the first of the war, but they didn't have a better one at the last. But they had another plane with 2 motors, one on each wing. These could never be coordinated at exactly the same speed. Consequently it produced a moaning sound that made it easy to identify what country they were from if you were on the ground. In the air there was too much noise from your own plane.

End of side one

Krueger: The Germans were quite successful in building good planes. They have always been good mechanics. I figured that the plane that they had, they had 2 throttles so that each one of those propellers was giving the same amount of pull. They didn't have the one in the back that we had. Each one of them was supposed to give the same amount of pull and to have the same amount of pull with the same amount of pitch on the propeller. There were no mufflers at all. You could hear it coming and it would go m-m-m-m,m-m-m-m, like that. That was when all the cylinders on each plane exploded in sequence with the other, the other motor on the plane. I was fortunate, I seldom went out but what I got a few holes. They rated you according to the number of miles you went behind the lines and the number of bullet holes you had in the plane. You were supposed to go out and bomb and come back. You were not supposed to go out hunting for combat. But you were also supposed to take pictures if it was in the daytime, or if it was at night you were supposed to take pictures if you hit an oil tanker or something and set something and set a fire, which happened to us once or twice. The fire could be seen for 50 miles. You watched your bombs falling. They fell flat. Then they turned over. In front of the bomb they had a vane on the back and they turned over and gradually they got shorter and shorter and shorter and then pretty soon they were just round. You were looking at them from a round direction. Then they disappeared because you couldn't see that far. They'd disappear and then you'd see the flash on the ground. And then you'd take the pictures of it. I took a good deal of pride in what I was doing. I didn't ever think that I would be able to make it through. I was one of 16 who had worked on this Caproni program. This is some of the leather work I did when I was in the hospital and I was always going to put it together and never got time. But here was a Caproni bomber. Here was an observation plane. And here was a fighter plane.

Ewig: OK, now this piece of leather has "Snapshots" on it. Was that a nickname for your squadron?

Krueger: No, that was just snapshots that I took during the time that I was in the service. And I made this design and put in on my album.

Ewig: I see, oh, it's about 18" by 12" it looks like.

Krueger: It is a little bigger than that.

Ewig: That's really nice.

Krueger: Now, if you'll set over on this side and let the light fall on these then I can give you the names. That was my old instructor there. If we can get these so that we can lay them down the other side. Just a bunch of foolishness down at the training school. There was a picture of myself. Here was the smallest pilot in the group. And one of the best pilots, Nick Johnson. He died with the flu in the bed next to me.

Ewig: What kind of flu was that that it was so serious?

Krueger: I don't know but when we were down at Palermo, Sicily, they had pictures instead of the flowers designating they had a banner across their door saying in memory of my dear father or in memory of my son or my daughter or so on. And there were over half of the buildings that had those banners on them as we went to the depot. I counted them and there was over half of the buildings that had those. And that is nothing of any particular importance only it showed that half of the families had lost a relative.

Interruption

Ewig: Did you plan to homestead out here after World War I, then?

Krueger: Oh, yes. I came to Torrington in the opening of 1920. There was one homestead that was a \$10,000 offer on for the relinquishment. So I decided that I'd always been lucky and I'd try that. So, I came out second which was just about as well if I'd come out 200th. Because the fellow that come out first took it. Then the next week I came on up to Powell. They had a drawing up here in the Frannie Division of the Shoshone Project and I drew a place there. I didn't know anything about land stakes, land corners, land division and such as that. I'd never seen a survey stake back in that country where I came from. I went back to my home in Kansas. I had the Chevrolet agency at Yates Center, Kansas, one summer and I sold 19 cars

and then I took the agency for the first tractor that was successful in that country and I sold 3 carloads of those. Then it came fall and General Motors man came around and he figured what I'd sold and what I'd done. And he said, I'm shipping you so many this next year. I'm shipping you so many and he based it on what I had done. I said, "I just can't do that. I can't sell that many. I've sold these others for cash." I just about cleaned the slate in this community. "Well," he said, "you have to do it, we have a new plan and it's called the General Motors Acceptance Plan. And you take a note, you get a few hundred dollars down and then you take a note and then you can trade that note in on the purchase of other equipment. More of the same and we'll give you credit for 80% of it." I sat down and figured it up and I said, "No way, then the fellow he would have to pay whatever he can sign the note and pay these, so much each month." And I figured it up and it figured 18%. I laughed at him. I said, "You don't expect me to fall for that do you? I don't think there's that many damn fools in the state of Kansas." He said, "Well, I'm sorry you feel that way about it, but if you retain your agency that's what you've got to do." So I said, "Well, I don't think that I'll accept it but what about giving me a little time to see what my banker has got to say about it." "Well," he said, "that will be all right." "I'll be back in about 3 weeks." When he came back I was already out of business. I sold out. And, I'd come out here in March to Powell and had drawn the place out here. Well, it was only about 10 or 12 acres. No, there was more than that. There was about 40 acres. It was really fair land and then the next 20 would be just almost impossible. And the next 100 was just so rough and hilly and sagebrushy that I couldn't see how I could ever do it. So I sold my agencies and took out a second hand car and a new car and a tractor and a disc and a plow and quit the agency and I put in a couple of hundred acres of wheat. Wheat was two and a half dollars a bushel. I came out the next spring to this drawing and drew this piece of land. I realized that I had to go back and harvest. And I went back to Kansas to harvest and I made an estimate that I was going to look the wheat crop over. I knew what expenses I had and I figured that I was going to come to Wyoming with \$40,000 to start ranching. And \$40,000 was a pretty good little chunk of money in those days. I went out on Sunday with a fellow and we estimated the amount of grain. It was just ready to cut. It begun raining on Monday and it rained every day for 6 weeks. That wheat just curled over and stuck its head in the ground. I was through. Well, I had filed out here in March and got this piece of land so I took my new Chevrolet and 3 trunks. I put 3 trunks in the back seat. It was a touring car. I had my army lockers and I put them in the back seat and I

wound up driving all day the first day and when night came I was 14 miles from home. I just hit so much gumbo. Worked all day. The next day I got over to the part of Kansas that was Flint Hills and there I made 120 miles that day. The next day I made 200 and the next day 206, and the next 208. There was no pass into the Big Horn Basin. You had to come over an area down in the Big Horn called the Devil's Slide or Reed's Ranch Road. I chose the Reed's Ranch Road and a lad about 19 years old was with me and when we were going down the mountain I burned out my brakes. I broke the frame in two on one side and pulled up a bunch of fence posts and wire. We patched it up and broke an axle. It wasn't the rear end, I was going to say the rear end, but it wasn't. It was an axle. Reed's Ranch was 27 miles from Thermopolis. I took that axle and put it on my shoulder and walked into Thermopolis and I got another axle and I went back out. I had a set of tools. I'd been trained as a mechanic in the army before I got through with aviation. I got to Thermopolis and I asked them what they wanted for a new axle. What they wanted to take me out there and they said a \$1 a mile. And I said, "I've been in the army too long for that." So, I went on up to Powell, I knew it was getting near time that I started to build on my homestead. I knew a dentist in Powell by the name of Dr. Ice, he was a Kansan. And I went out to his place and we got some lumber and hauled it out to my place and scattered it around. All we had was a mitre saw. It wasn't a regular saw, it was one with a steel back that ran down it. I forget what they called those. And a hammer. We didn't even have a square and we started putting in the foundation for the cabin first. We worked 2 or 3 days on it in the evenings. Then I went back after my car. When I got there why this boy had disappeared. So I went down to the ranch and the tires had all disappeared. They had what we called detachable lugs at that time. Maybe you've seen them. They were lugs that went on with bolts and those lugs held the rims on the wheels. I got going and I went back. When I rolled my tires up the mountain and when I got them up there to that pass, it took a couple of days just to carry them up the mountain. And when I got them up to that pass why the boy was gone and the lugs were gone. I didn't have enough lugs to hold the tires on the wheels. So I had to go back to Thermopolis again and get a pocketful of lugs. I started back to Thermopolis and I'd already walked 54 miles when I started back to Thermopolis and there was a couple of fellows going back and the people down at the ranch told that this boy had built a bonfire and the coyotes came up around the camp out there on the mountain and just howled and

that he was just scared to death and that he'd thrown those lugs at the coyotes. So, I got out there and he was gone. There wasn't anything that I could do about it. Only, there was a couple of fellows come along with a new white truck. It would make about 55 miles an hour. They said if you want to hook on behind us we'll pull you up over the next rise and from there on it's downhill. In those days we came into Thermopolis and then went to Meeteetse. They pulled me up over and I took it easy coming down and I got into Meeteetse and there had been a silver strike. These 2 old boys they said we'd like to go out to this silver strike. Well, I had the frame welded and I'd had carried those lugs out from Thermop and I got the frame welded and I got going real nice. These fellows said if you'll take us out to where that silver strike is, we don't want to run this big truck that we've got back there. And they said, "Well if you'll take us out there to see that silver strike we'll loan you enough money to get into Powell." So I borrowed \$5.00 from them and drove into Powell. Then I went out to this dentist's place and borrowed \$5.00 from him to pay them off. They were about to leave and I'd begun to get curious. I said what are you doing with this big truck? Oh, they said, we're going to Canada to haul grain. And I said, do you make much money at it? Oh yes, they said, it's a paying business. Well, I didn't realize at the time that the grain that they were hauling were grain alcohol. It was in bootleg days. And they had the fastest vehicle on the road. We went out and looked at that silver strike and they said, it's no good. It's just no good. We can't do anything, you can't make any money on that kind of ore. But they said, if you ever see any yellow ore that looks like sulfur investigate it because it probably is carnotite uranium. And some 40 years later I ~~saw~~ for myself carnotite on Pryor Mountain. But I come in flat broke and the next morning I went out to Elk Basin and got a job wrenching rods on a towing machine. About the dirtiest job in an oil field. It did pay money.

Ewig: How much did it pay at that time?

Krueger: I think it was \$4.47 a day. And your board. And bunk-house. I think it was \$4.47 if I remember right. And I went out there and I worked there until Armistice Day. Armistice Day it went down to 20 below. I quit. I'd had enough. I figured I had enough to get on through the winter. And then just about that time the oil company came by and they wanted a right away across my place for a pipeline and I said no. No way, no way, I've lived in Oklahoma and Texas and I know you fellows, you're all just alike. You talk awful nice but if you have an oil spill on your land you never want to pay for it. So, I wouldn't talk to the local man and this went on. The area man came up to see me. And I said,

"Just no way. There's a lot of country out here you can go through without going through my place. And I've seen these spills and I know that you can ruin a man in one night before you can get it shut off." So, I had worked in the oil fields in Oklahoma and a little in Texas.

End of tape

Krueger: In the state of Wyoming from the field to the refinery. They were shipping oil ~~of~~ of Frannie but this was the first pipeline. The head of the Illinois Pipeline Company came out at that time I had my shack built. It was just a little 8' by 10'. Had a little monkey stove. We called them monkey stoves. Had a little oven. The cabin had a hole in the floor and a little pit down below where I kept my groceries when I wanted to leave so they wouldn't freeze. A little window on the side and bunk bed. It was all just quite convenient. This was the head man of the Illinois Pipeline Company and he came in and he brought his other 3 men in. He was the 4th one and they sat along on the bunk. And I said, "You fellows had dinner?" No, they hadn't. "Well," I said, "how would you like to have dinner?" And this old boy thought it would be quite an experience to have dinner with a homesteader. He was back from, I think it was Indiana. He said, "These fellows tell me that you wouldn't sign a contract for crossing." And I said, "Oh, I don't know where they get that kind of an idea." He looked at them, you know, pretty hard. He said, "You mean you'd sign a contract?" I said, "Certainly." "Well," he said, "how about it?" Well, I said, "if you want to read the contract to me I'll listen to it and I'll tell you what I'm objecting to." So he read the contract and I agreed to everything that it said. I didn't have only about a dollar and a half in my pocket and there were no jobs open. And he said, "You mean that you'll sign that contract?" And I said, "Why certainly. I don't see anything bad about it." I said, "I'll sign it." So I turned to this fellow that was with me, Bob Fulton, and I said, "Bob, there's some frozen meat in back of the shack and you're a pretty good cook, supposing you fire up that stove and cook us a bunch of potatoes and gravy and prepare that meat." It was a frozen jack rabbit. "We've got enough bread." And you know those fellows set down and they ate every damn thing that I had. And in the meantime this fellow, this head of the company, just sat there, he was enjoying himself and he was lecturing these other 3 fellows. He said, "You made this fellow mad somehow. I don't know how. You must have insulted him. He's very reasonable. He's intelligent. He knows what he wants." And in the

meantime I folded up the contract and laid it back on the other side. And he started in to give these boys a lecture and he was really dressing them down and I was beginning to smile. And these fellows were about to break into a laugh. I had the contract over on the other side. When he got through with his lecture he looked for his contract and it was gone. It was over here. He turned around and he said, "Now what the hell do you want?" "Well," I said, "I want a job. There's no work in this country. I want a job." He said, "What can you do?" "Oh," I said, "I'd make a good time keeper. How many men are you going to have on this deal?" "Oh," he said, "about 160." "Well," I said, "you'd better hire me as time keeper." "Well, yes," he said, "I'll do that. If you can do it, I'll do it." I said, "Well, I can do it. I can keep the time. How many foremen do you got?" He said, "I've got 5." I said, "Have each of your foremen turn in his time book every day. I can't go out and see 160 men." There was a pipe stringing crew and a pipe laying crew and ditch digging crew and the pipe screwing crew and then the refill crew. So I got all the time books. Every night they brought in their time. And I kept the books for them. We ran from the top of Pole Cat Bench down to Byron. And we hooked into a gas line at Byron that went to Greybull. In those days Greybull was a refinery. So, we also hooked into a gas line at Byron that went to Greybull. And so, before I got through making the deal, this old boy said, "That's one of the finest meals I've ever had in my life." He said, "I don't know when I've enjoyed one so much." And I said, "You think this fellow is a pretty good cook I've got?" He said, Yes. "Well, I'll tell you one thing, he's a good mechanic too and he hasn't had a job for 2 months." And I said, "He can run that screwing machine or he can run that ditch digger just like a top." "Well," he said, "if he can do that, that's his job." So he gave him a top job too. In those days there was a lot of gambling going on in these camps outside. I went to town and bought overalls and mittens and overshoes and thin gloves and everything that you could think of for a man to wear. I brought them out and after hours in the evening I ran a little store there. I dealt a hand of blackjack on double or nothing and the first night they cleaned me out entirely. The next night they were there so I went back to town and got a new supply and the next night they were back. I ran a straight game and they were back and I was just as lucky as I was unlucky the first night. I come out of there in March with \$1,500 which was enough to get started on my homestead.

Ewig: Did you buy your land from a federal land project?

Krueger: No, I homesteaded. The Bureau of Reclamation held a loan on the land for the cost of bringing the water to it. It proved to be a very rough, very hard deal. 60% of the settlers left the project.

Ewig: Which project was this?

Krueger: Frannie Division of the Shoshone Project. That created an opportunity. Later they elected me and a fellow by the name of Charlie Davis to go to Washington and draw up a new contract with the Bureau of Reclamation. We went back to Washington and worked about 6 weeks on the new contract. It was a senator by the name of Cranston who wanted to abandon the Frannie Division. At that time old Senator Kendrick and that old Civil War veteran from down at Cheyenne.

Ewig: Warren?

Krueger: Warren. Senator Warren. Were the controlling factors. Senator Warren had a tremendous influence and so did Senator Kendrick. We went back and explained the situation that was causing these people to leave and they arranged for a hearing. I can't think who the secretary was, Work, Work was the Secretary of Interior. And he was quite a fellow. He was a good sincere man and so were Kendrick and Warren. We went before the senate committee, or no, the committee of the house, house committee and we had to appear at this meeting. I'd never been before a senatorial committee or had anything to do with law. But, Cranston just tried to shut us off every way that he could. He kept after Senator Kendrick until he got him mad. And old Senator Kendrick just walked over, walked up to him and he was in an office chair, this fellow was in an office chair and just kind of stood a straddle of him and when he laid down the law he told him just exactly what he would do. And he said, when he was finished, he said, "And that's all there is to it." He turned around and walked out. And that was all there was to it. That fellow knew that old Kendrick had enough power to do it and that old Warren would back him up.

Ewig: Why was Cranston trying to stop that project?

Krueger: He didn't ^{believe} ~~believe~~ in Western reclamation.

Ewig: Do you know which state Cranston was from?

Krueger: Wisconsin, I think. I think it was Wisconsin. I could be wrong, it might have been Michigan, but I think it was Wisconsin. So after that they got the Secretary of Agriculture to give us permission to write a contract

with their lawyers. There were 19 contracts in existence in the United States, reclamation contracts. So we didn't hire a lawyer but we got a big room and we laid these 19 contracts down and on each item that we took up, that we wanted in, we read all 19 of these and then picked out the one that we thought would be best, be most adaptable. And these 19 had been passed. That included all of the West and the South and even back into Kansas as far as Garden City. We picked out the clauses that we wanted that had been approved. And on each one of these various points we picked out, we read these 19 contracts and then picked out the ones we wanted. Then we discussed them and some we could just throw out immediately if we didn't like the way they were written or something. When we got through, we'd pinned it down to 3 or 4 and then we'd decide which one of those would best fit our needs. Then we'd take a copy of that and put it as a part of our contract. They tried to find fault with it but we had copied those clauses verbatim. They couldn't find fault because it had already been passed and approved. So we got that contract all written up and ready to go and we got permission to send a copy of it to the paper in Powell to be published. It had to be published so many times before the end of the year and this law would expire at the end of the year and Cranston evidently knew that and he kept track of it. When he got down to where he figured there was not enough time to meet this requirement then he said go ahead. But he didn't know that we had completed this contract, that we had a copy of it in Powell at the newspaper and according to the state law it had to be published 3 consecutive times. We beat the gun by about 3 days. Otherwise that project would have been abandoned. So, that was my first experience with anything like that and it was a good experience. We were there about 6 weeks.

Ewig: Did the project work well then after you had gotten the contract?

Krueger: It was the only one that we could get. There was nothing else that we could get. It made 5% of the income of the farmer went to pay the cost of his place. But so many people had left the project that there was about 40% of them left. Then it was a question of rejuvenating their places. Getting those back into circulation legally. I had never had anything to do with anything like that. A lot of people were wanting to abandon the Frannie Division. I came out openly and fought this in our meetings. And I fought this thing through. So this committee of 15 that had been appointed called a district election and both Charlie Davis and myself were elected on that, as 2 of the 5 commissioners. Charlie lived only a few years after that. I was reelected

and I served for 20 or 25 years as chairman of that district. We got into water fights with various districts and won them. So, that was when the first opportunity came to me to run for the legislature. I refused to. Well, Park County was about 70% Republican and I was always a Democrat. So some of the leading Democrats came down one Sunday and asked me to run for the legislature and I said, "Oh, I didn't want to do that." And I refused. The next Sunday they came back again. The third Sunday they came back again and they said, "If you run we'll pay your expenses. We're satisfied that you can be elected." And I said, "No, I'm a Democrat and a Democrat wouldn't stand more chance than a snowball in hell being elected in this country." Well, I did run but I refused to accept any assistance from anyone else or any of these fellows because I said that if I was elected I wanted to be able to do what I wanted to do without having to do the things as they saw it and not as it was. Just the way that I saw it was the way that I wanted to vote. So, I ran for the legislature and I got a break or two and the '30s came on and everybody was having a rough time getting by and of course, in those days we got \$5 a day for our legislative service and our fare to Cheyenne and back. And I served in the minority the first time. Then the next year I decided that if I was going to go ahead and run again I wanted to make a little more progress as I had other things that I wanted to get through and I went back and ran and after I was elected I became an assistant floor leader. And then the next 2 years went by and I ran again and I became speaker. Then I said if I haven't been able to accomplish what I wanted to in the time involved, it's time that I left, it's time I quit and let someone else run. So I voluntarily quit without being elected and I laid off 2 years and didn't run. The fellow who was the opponent, a newspaperman from Cody published a little article and said now that the election is over and we have someone who knows what it is all about, we'll be able to get things done. And so, 2 years later, in 1941, I ran again and defeated him. It made me mad. I went back but also one of the main things that I was interested in was soil conservation. I went to Casper to a meeting and the mayor of Casper got up to make his welcome speech and he said, "I don't know anything about soil conservation, but I do know about Casper," and then he went on to tell us about what a wonderful little city Casper was. They had a project down there and it made me mad and I got up and answered him. I was supposed to be the one to answer him and I got up and I said, "Well you'd better find out something about soil conservation because 25 years from now ~~you're~~ ^{you} oil, if it's like the rest of the oil in the United States, may go dry. But if this Casper-Alcova project goes through, you'll have a source of

income which will be steady from the farmers who are operating on that land. And I'd advise you to get wised up on what this soil conservation means to the state of Wyoming." So, when the meeting broke up, why I found that I had been elected as President of the State Soil Conservation Association.

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